

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration of the objections and rejections contained in the Office Action of March 21, 2003 is respectfully requested.

Initially, the Examiner's refusal to enter the substitute specification is acknowledged. In fact, no new matter has been entered into the substitute specification, and it is resubmitted herewith.

The Examiner rejected claims 5-7, 9 and 11-15 as being unpatentable over WO '541. However, the Examiner also went on to indicate that "claims 10 and 8 (combined) and claim 16 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims." The Examiner's reference to claims 10 and 8 as "combined" is not quite understood. In any case, it is noted that claim 10 has not been rejected over prior art. Accordingly, claim 10 has now been redrafted into independent form, and should be allowable without more. Indication of such is respectfully requested.

The Examiner's specific discussion of WO '541 and its interpretation and applicability to the claims of the present application is gratefully acknowledged. In such discussion, the Examiner reasserts that the claims read upon WO '451. In particular, the Examiner takes the position that the lines and valves 70, 80, 40, 66 and 68 to element number 22, for example shown in Fig. 2 of WO '541, correspond to the various claim limitations. The Examiner specifically notes that the device for element 22 is deemed to correspond to the claimed low-pressure store. This position by the Examiner is respectfully, but most strenuously, traversed as being clearly incorrect.

Element 22 is not a low-pressure store. Indeed, it is not a store or storage facility of any type.

It is noted that in WO '541, the object is in fact to provide an arrangement for the recovery of excess gases in order to reduce the need for burning off the gases by a torch in a separation plant in which gas is separated from oil. The goal is to provide an arrangement in which excess gases are conducted back to the gas fraction formed in the main process. However, in WO '541, this is not accomplished by conducting surplus or residual gases from a processing section through a gas valve connected thereto to a collection line connected to at least one low-pressure store so that the residual

gas is conducted thereto. Nor does it provide at least one additional line that is connected to at least one low-pressure store to conduct fluid from the store.

In WO '541, oil is conducted through a conduit 10 to a first separator 12, a second separator 18 and then a third separator 22. Each of these separators separates out a respective gas fraction. After the separator 22, the oil is led through a conduit 24 to a storage supply for further handling or directly into a pipe conduit for transportation to a remotely disposed used location. However, the gas from each of sections 12, 18 and 22 is conducted from respective separators to compressors 26, 28, 30 and 32 to gradually increase the pressure of the gas. The various lines in the compression system and from the separators for gas are coupled to a common collection conduit 40 through safety valves 42, 44, 46 and 56, 58, 60 and 62. The collection conduit further includes a separator 64 for removing oil from the gas. However, illustrated by Figs. 1 and 2, and as discussed on page 7 of WO '541, the excess gas is recirculated to the process by conducting it together with the separator glass from the third separator 22 back to the first compressor 26 and the row of compressors. In other words, the excess gas is not sent to a low-pressure store, it is recirculated into the gas compression cycle. Nonetheless, a torch 74 is still included for emergency excess pressure situations.

By contrast, with the present invention according to independent claims 5 and 11, a gas valve that is connected with the processing section, which is operable to leave gas pressure from the processing section, conducts surplus or residual gas from the processing section to the collection line, which then stores it in the at least one low-pressure store. In other words, it is not directly sent back to the processing section to be compressed through compressors, but is rather stored in a low-pressure store. A further line enables the fluid in the low-pressure store to be conducted therefrom, as required by the claims.

The Examiner reads element 80 as the gas valve of the claims. However, the gas valve as recited in each of the independent claims is connected with the processing section and operable to leave gas pressure from the processing section by conducting surplus or residual gas from the processing section. This eventually winds up sending the gas through the collection line to the at least one low-pressure store. However, the valve 80 in WO '541 is not connected to a collection line connected to at least one low-pressure store such that the gas from the processing section is

conducted to the low-pressure store. Rather, it is connected between the liquid separator 64 and connection point 66. Connection point 66 is between separator 22 and compressor 26, with the flow direction being from the separator 22 to the compressor 26. It is controlled so that it automatically closes when one of the valves 76, 78 in branch conduit 72 to the torch 74 opens. Further, it is noted that the gas flowing point 66 has its pressure increased in case it is lower than the pressure of the gas flowing from the separator 22. Accordingly, gas does not flow through valve 80 to the separator 22, but to the compressor 26, and this is ensured by the pressure increasing means 84. Note page 10.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that neither claim 5 nor claim 11 can read upon WO '541, and that the components of WO '541 cannot be interpreted in any manner to correspond to the claim language and perform the required function. In particular, the Examiner's position that separator 22, which is part of the processing section and clearly identified in WO '541 as separating gas from oil, corresponds to a low-pressure store, is clearly an unreasonable position. Separator 22 is a separator. One of ordinary skill in the art, even taking the broadest reasonable interpretation of "low-pressure store", would not consider separator 22 to be a low-pressure store. It does not have a storage function. Indeed, as noted above, the oil is conducted from separator 22 by conduit 24 to storage. As discussed above, there is in fact no storage of gas considered in the system of WO '541. As clearly discussed, the gas is recycled back into the processing system to the extent possible, and only in emergencies is it sent to the torch 74.

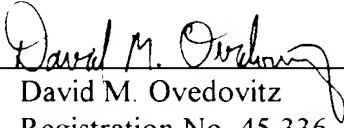
Furthermore, collection conduit 40 of WO '541 does not go to a low-pressure store. It sends the gas collector thereby either back into the system through the compressor 26, or to the torch 74.

Accordingly, it is respectfully that no reasonable interpretation of the reference or the claim language can result in the claims being met by WO '541. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims pending in the present application are allowable over WO '541. Indication of such is respectfully requested.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

Sverre Johannesen OVERÅ et al.

By: 
David M. Ovedovitz
Registration No. 45,336
for
Nils E. Pedersen
Registration No. 33,145
Attorney for Applicants

NEP/DMO/krl
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
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